



["Do you remember the days of slavery?"](#) – Burning Spear

Short General Introduction

We are about to begin a new course on the Communist University: **Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace**.

The series begins with Chapter 1 of Clausewitz's "On War", described by one critic (Bernard Brodie) as "*Not simply the greatest, but the only great book on war*". Clausewitz shows the dialectical (or in Clausewitz's own terms "reciprocal") nature of any study of war. He also shows that war can only be an interval between negotiations. It is the pursuit of politics by other means, makeshift means which cannot be conclusive, but which have to yield in due course to politics again.

We are for peace but we have to be prepared for war. Although we have no interest in bloodshed, we are not pacifists. We seek the ascendancy of the working proletariat. We know that the bourgeois power is everywhere defended with brutal force.

The ANC democratic breakthrough of 1994 owes its existence, in part, to successful armed struggle. Our breakthrough is in turn a part of a historic worldwide struggle against Imperialism, which has often been, and continues to be, an armed struggle. Yet our South African armed struggle is barely acknowledged. Instead, bourgeois virtues are daily paraded in front of us by bourgeois “role models”. South African police shoot demonstrators, while bourgeois pacifism is pushed as a compulsory ideology for the rest of us.

The above paragraph was written before the Marikana massacre of 2012. Post-apartheid police fired on demonstrators during the 2007 public service strike, and on earlier occasions. The majority of police in South Africa are organised in a COSATU-affiliated union. In the matter of state coercion, there are many contradictions.

Internationally in the 21st Century, Imperialism has embarked upon a series of wars, including wars in Africa, which have the character of “underdeveloping” once again and subordinating, or recolonising, African countries.

An example is the destruction of Libya by the Imperialist forces of NATO in 2011.

In 2015 there is a refugee crisis in Europe which is the direct result of Imperialist aggression in Libya, in Syria, and in African countries such as Mali.

The struggle with Imperialism is an active struggle. It produces dramatic manifestations and upheavals, all the time.

It will be necessary to have a frank look at the question of the military. The political democracy – ourselves – must know enough about war to be able to oversee and to command the military, and all of the “special bodies of armed men”. The military must always be subordinate to the democratic political authority.

This is the most important thing to know. The military must always be subordinate to the political. We will return to this question repeatedly during the course.

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